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Gulf of Mexico Regional Federal Workgroup

Information Paper for
Corps Gulf of Mexico Workgroup Team

Corps Participation in Gulf of Mexico Regional Federal Workgroup

The Corps is one of thirteen Federal agencies participating in the Gulf of Mexico Regional Partnership Federal Workgroup. Formed as one of a number of ongoing implementation efforts responding to the Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan (USAOP)¹, the Workgroup is helping to provide a venue for focused collaboration and integration of federal efforts to help address the complex issues facing the Gulf of Mexico. The USAOP recognizes the state leadership in forming the Gulf of Mexico Alliance² and identifying key priorities for action in the Gulf region, and calls for increased integration of resources, knowledge, and expertise to address these key priorities. Workgroup efforts emphasize supporting the priority state coastal and ocean issues as raised through the Alliance. Ongoing Federal Workgroup and Gulf efforts will culminate in the presentation of a Gulf Alliance Plan of Action, and Federal Responses at the 2005 Gulf of Mexico Summit 7 – 9 November.

Committee on Ocean Policy

Established by EO 13366, at Cabinet-level to coordinate the activities of executive branch departments and agencies regarding ocean-related matters to advance the environmental and economic interests of present and future generations of Americans. The chairman of the CEQ serves as chairman of this Committee. ([U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy](#)) government site

The Committee supporting bodies include:

- Integrated Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management ("Aqua Box")³
- [Subcommittee on Integrated Management of Ocean Resources \(SIMOR\)](#)⁴ government site
- [NSTC Joint Committee on Ocean Science and Technology \(JSOST\)](#)⁵ government site

The Federal Workgroup provides status reports and products for approval through the SIMOR and JSOST to the Aqua Box. Per the USAOP, the Federal Workgroup is jointly headed by EPA and NOAA⁶.

Gulf of Mexico Alliance

The Alliance has identified five regionally significant priority coastal and ocean issues as effectively addressed through cooperation at local, state, and federal levels. These focus areas, which represent a starting point for action, include:

- Reductions in nutrient loading
- Improvement of Gulf water quality, with an emphasis on beaches and shellfish beds
- Restoration of coastal wetlands and estuarine habitats
- Identification of Gulf habitats to inform management
- Gulf of Mexico environmental education

The states drafted a series of [regional white papers](#) government site — one for each focus area, describing the issues and preliminary recommendations for addressing them, and impediments. The papers have provided a focus for the Federal Workgroup discussions to explore collaborative opportunities to contribute to addressing the Alliance's priority issues, enhance regional expertise and resources available. Through a series of conference calls w/the states, the Federal Workgroup is facilitating further specification of the state issues and actionable item that can be included in the Alliance Action Plan.


The Federal Workgroup efforts to support the Alliance are:


- Building upon existing partnership frameworks in the Gulf, particularly the federal-state partnership framework operated through the EPA Gulf of Mexico Program
- Establishing teams with federal co-leads to collaborate federal responses within each of the state white-paper focus areas
- Striving to maximize the impact of the federal response by:
 - focusing or re-focusing ongoing and planned agency programs in the region to specifically address state-identified issues;
 - identifying *high-impact* program integration opportunities to address these issues;
 - identifying near-term deliverables and commitments that will increase the likelihood of long-term Alliance success.
- Assisting the Gulf States in creating a Gulf Alliance Plan of Action to be presented at the Gulf of Mexico Summit in November 2005.

The Gulf of Mexico Federal-State Partnership will serve as a “laboratory” for exploring better mechanisms for regional management, applying an ecosystem approach to management, applying integrating coastal and ocean observations for management purposes, and emphasizing local-state-federal collaboration.

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¹The [U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy](#)  government site completed “An Ocean Blueprint for the 21st Century”. On December 17, 2004 , the President submitted to Congress his formal response, the [US Ocean Action Plan](#) (pdf, KB)

²[Gulf Alliance](#):  government site a partnership, initiated in 2004, of the US Gulf of Mexico states of FL, AL, MS, LA, MS, TX, to increase regional collaboration on enhancing the environmental and economic health of the Gulf of Mexico. The Alliance also includes participation by the Gulf of Mexico States Accord , which brings prospective collaboration with the Mexican Gulf of Mexico states

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